

VZCZCXRO7406  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHGO #0342/01 1600649  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 090649Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9084  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2036  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5511  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9107  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6684  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4494  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2487  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000342

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: MIXED NLD MESSAGES ON DIALOGUE

REF: A. RANGOON 327

[1](#)B. RANGOON 254

RANGOON 00000342 001.14 OF 003

Classified By: Political Officer Sean K. O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On June 8, Charge met with National League for Democracy (NLD) Central Executive Committee (CEC) members Khin Maung Swe, U Nyunt Wai, and U Than Tun to discuss questions posed by Labor Minister (also Relations with Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) Minister) Major General Aung Kyi in response to an NLD message, conveyed by Charge, of interest in dialogue. The Minister had asked what the NLD would view as the appropriate level for initiating dialogue. The meeting made obvious that NLD leaders have multiple views on the questions of whether and how to engage with the regime. U Nyunt Wai prefers the NLD to talk with senior military officers, such as Vice Senior General Maung Aye. He insists a public announcement of lofty goals is essential. Khin Maung Swe and Than Tun seemed to think a military officer with connections to the top is key, regardless of level. Khin Maung Swe indicated there may be additional conversation in the NLD's CEC about the public announcement idea. All agreed that discussion of dialogue should not be allowed to draw attention away from the regime's treatment of ASSK.

[1](#)2. (C) U Nyunt Wai confirmed reports in the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper that on June 4 and 5 authorities summoned several NLD members, including three CEC members, to warn them against making statements critical of the ASSK trial. End Summary.

NLD Uncles Apparently Divided Over Engagement

[1](#)3. (C) On June 8, Charge met with NLD CEC members Khin Maung Swe, U Nyunt Wai, and U Than Tun to discuss possibilities for dialogue with the regime. Khin Maung Swe had earlier asked the Charge to convey to authorities the NLD's interest in unconditional dialogue about all issues. In a May 29 meeting

with the CDA, Minister Aung Kyi queried what the NLD would view as the appropriate level for such dialogue (ref A). Over the weekend, Khin Maung Swe sent Charge a letter with an enigmatic response. Charge requested a meeting to follow up. In the conversation, it was apparent CEC members have varying views on whether and how to engage with the regime.

#### Nyunt Wai and the Hard Line

-----

¶4. (C) Uncles U Nyunt Wai and U Than Tun first appeared. U Nyunt Wai indicated dialogue would not have to begin at the top level, but he believes a public announcement would be essential to highlight that the dialogue concerns the political future. He stressed that he strongly prefers the NLD deal only with senior military officers in the chain of command, such as Vice Senior General Maung Aye, and not Labor Minister Aung Kyi, who is no longer in the military chain of command. Nyunt Wai insisted both sides would have to agree talks would eventually involve NLD General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi and Senior General Than Shwe, since they are the key decision makers.

¶5. (C) Nyunt Wai appeared generally skeptical of further dialogue with Aung Kyi, pointing out that the regime liaison has engaged in dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi before, but that nothing substantive has come of those talks. Nyunt Wai said "it doesn't appear the SPDC has a serious plan or approach to dialogue" and added that before the NLD decides to engage again, the NLD should be sure the regime is serious about an open, genuine, political dialogue.

Enter a More Moderate Khin Maung Swe

RANGOON 00000342 002.3 OF 003

-----

¶6. (C) Khin Maung Swe joined the conversation a short while later, heard what had been said, left briefly to consult with someone, then returned and suggested a dialogue could commence between the CEC and a regime official "at the colonel level." Khin Maung Swe and fellow CEC member Than Tun seemed in agreement that a "responsible" military officer with connections to the top is key, regardless of rank. Khin Maung Swe indicated there may be additional CEC conversation about whether the beginnings of dialogue would have to be publicly announced.

¶7. (C) Khin Maung Swe told Charge all CEC members welcome dialogue in principle and would likely designate himself and U Than Tun as lead negotiators. Like U Nyunt Wai, he stressed dialogue should be substantive and not a propaganda tool for the regime to distract the world from its treatment of ASSK. Khin Maung Swe said, "In the end, we want an ongoing dialogue, not a one off." The goal is to narrow the gap between the NLD's Shwegondaing Declaration (ref B) and the regime's constitution. He noted at one point that a mediator might be useful in achieving progress and suggested the Charge might be appropriate. Charge noted that a neutral facilitator can sometimes be useful but suggested the U.S. Chief of Mission may not be perceived as the best choice.

#### Win Tin's View

-----

¶8. (C) In a June 9 meeting with Poloff on a separate matter, CEC member Win Tin stressed that the CEC is united in its desire to engage in substantive dialogue, but acknowledged there is disagreement over how best to approach any resumption of talks. Win Tin commented that Khin Maung Swe does not want to take too hard a line - possibly out of a desire to avoid more prison time - and would be more willing than others to accept any regime willingness to talk at face value. Other CEC members, such as Nyunt Wai, are more skeptical of the GOB's motives and worry the regime would use new talks as a propaganda tool or a way to marginalize Aung

San Suu Kyi. As a result, Win Tin said the CEC would likely continue to debate the timing and nature of any resumption of dialogue.

¶9. (C) Win Tin said he shares Nyunt Wai's concerns and also believes that any profession of interest by the regime to return to dialogue be "appropriate and sincere." When asked to clarify, Win Tin stressed that the GOB should approach the CEC or Aung San Suu Kyi directly, rather than through diplomatic channels, such as our Embassy. (Note: Charge and Poloff reminded all the CEC members we met that the Embassy is not conveying a regime offer to engage in dialogue, but rather relaying a hypothetical question from Aung Kyi about the level of any possible dialogue, given that a CEC member, reportedly speaking on behalf of NLD Chair Aung Shwe, asked Charge to convey a message to the regime of NLD willingness to engage.) In the end, Win Tin lamented, "We are David without a slingshot, so we must maintain our dignity and insist the regime deal with us directly and with respect before entering into dialogue."

#### Regime Summons and Warns NLD Members

-----

¶10. (C) U Nyunt Wai confirmed reports in the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper that on June 4 and 5, authorities summoned several NLD members, including three CEC members, to warn them against making statements critical of the ASSK trial. Nyunt Wai said that on June 5, Police Special Branch Colonel Win Naing Tun warned him and CEC members U Than Tun and U Hla Pe that a June 2 statement by NLD youth criticizing the trial constituted a violation of Burmese law. The SB Colonel then asked the three CEC members to sign a document acknowledging that the CEC had approved the NLD youth

RANGOON 00000342 003.3 OF 003

announcement and that they understood it was a violation of Burmese law. Nyunt Wai said, in the CEC view, they were merely signing that they acknowledged the regime view. U Nyunt Wai commented that authorities clearly intended the meeting to be a threat, but stressed he and his colleagues refuse to be intimidated. NLD spokesman Nyan Win confirmed that on June 4, authorities also summoned four NLD youth - U Hla Thein, U Myo Myunt, U Hla Oo, and U Aye Tun - similarly to warn them about their actions, and to obtain a statement shifting ultimate responsibility to the Uncles.

#### Comment

-----

¶11. (C) It appears to us unlikely that a productive dialogue between the regime and the NLD is possible in the current climate of intense suspicion, with a history of each side thinking the other has been insincere. Aung San Suu Kyi's ongoing detention is also a major stumbling block -- both because it poisons the environment and because without her leadership, the CEC is not apt to make any bold moves. Nonetheless, Charge has undertaken to fulfill the CEC's initial request to convey messages and regime responses. In doing so, Charge has also encouraged both sides not to focus on reasons why not to talk, but instead to start talking, even if pessimistic about outcomes, since one never knows until one engages what results might be achievable. This week's discussions with a variety of CEC members suggest that any broad-based NLD interest in dialogue is, in the minds of several CEC members, overwhelmed by doubts when it comes to actually contemplating how such a dialogue might unfold.

DINGER